Has decentralised governance actually worked in Hyderabad?

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Case No 1-0009

This Case Brief contains:

Reframing Urban Inclusion

The opening set of cases produced by IIHS represents a focus central to our institutional mission, its teaching and its practice: urban inclusion. Through an on-going collaborative, multi-year research project titled 'Reframing Urban Inclusion', the 30 cases available on the website, www.cases.iihs.co.in include original teaching and learning cases commissioned and produced at IIHS through support from the Ford Foundation.

The cases were curated to address a particular set of challenges. The first is pedagogical. IIHS' stated aim is to be part of a global moment to re-think urban theory and practice from India, South Asia and the Global South. These cases are a key curricular and pedagogical intervention within that effort. Distributed through open access modes to encourage widespread, public and diverse forms of use, the cases seek to give scholars and educators in the Global South a new canon to teach with, that begins from and is responsive to place.

The second is more outward facing. India is at a critical moment in its urbanisation. The urban agenda has begun to emerge strongly on the national political register, and questions of how to shape policy agendas from housing to employment, planning to service delivery, are more pressing than ever before. It is our hope that these cases will therefore equally be used by and inform an evidence-based, empirically rich, conceptually grounded and reflexive practice and interface with policy.

Since 2013, the project has brought together leading academics and practitioners from different disciplines to identify and contextualise social and economic realities of Indian cities through the case method. We hope that they will provide new evidence of the possible opportunities and mechanisms for urban integration as well as build a conceptual and empirical foundation for politically, socially, and economically inclusive cities.

The project has three thematic foci:

1. Conceptualising Pro-Poor Planning

   Urban planning processes determine access to basic resources such as land, shelter and housing, livelihoods, mobility, and security. Inclusive urban planning is aimed at serving all the citizens of the city, reducing vulnerability and addressing exclusion from access to these basic resources.

   Cases in this theme (1) untangle the current state of urban planning and its effects on vulnerability and exclusion, (2) explore how meaningful participation can be more effective in pro-poor planning, and (3) highlight opportunities for, and instances of successful integration across agencies and organisations involved in urban planning.

2. Re-visiting Settlement Upgrading

This theme seeks to expand and re-articulate debates on slums in India. The 'slum' is a form of an urban settlement that is situated at the intersection of land markets, new urban political economies, the efficacy of the state as a provider of housing to the poor, differentiated state-citizen relations, splintered urban infrastructure, questions of law, legality and planning, as well as conceptions of urban citizenship.

Cases in this theme (1) explore the processes of settlement and resettlement, paying attention to the market and political forces that shape the outcomes, (2) broaden the scope of settlement transformation from spatial upgradation to impacts on other sites of transformation such as livelihoods and employment, and (3) explore alternative imaginations of 'property rights' and tenure regimes.

3. Re-drawing the Picture: Metrics of Urban Inclusion

The dynamics of urban poverty and vulnerability are poorly understood. We know that the security of tenure, spatial coherence of urban infrastructure and service delivery, transit distances between livelihoods and living spaces, socio- cultural identities and social networks play important roles in inclusive cities. However, we have limited statistical data and information on the locational and distribution patterns of urban India.

Cases in this theme (1) examine the use of data in urban decision making and identify potential sites for intervention, (2) provide a more contextual and holistic analysis of urban dynamics, moving beyond sector-wise administrative data collection methods, and (3) emphasise improvements in information and learning from experience for local decision making.

IIHS Case Method

The IIHS case is a work-in-progress that represents experiments in different forms of creating interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral cases, as well as a diversity of pedagogical environments to learn and teach with these cases. The opening set of cases is, thus, also in a sense, an experiment in form and teaching modes. Given this, we do not claim a singular 'IIHS Case Method' or any one form or definition of a case. Indeed, one of the explicit aims of case development at IIHS is to challenge conventional ideas of what case-based learning is.

How then does a user know how to use cases? Pedagogical transactions will differ from case to case and indeed multiple options will be open within each case. Therefore, in order to aid users, all IIHS cases come with a set of consistent elements that help users navigate through the diversity of form and content. These are:

- **Preface:** Every case begins with an introduction by the case writer that describes their own approach to the case. How did the case writer frame the case? Why did they choose to structure it as they have? What were their intentions in writing the case?
- **Teaching Note:** The second shared case element is the Teaching Note. Here, the case writer lays out their imagination of how they would teach with the case in its current form. They suggest learning outcomes, pedagogical modes, learning environments and assessment frames. True to the diversity of the cases, each of these is particular to the case.
- **The Main Case:** This is the main body of the case—its core empirics, arguments, discourse and data. Across the cases, these come in different forms: PowerPoint presentations, audio-visual material, web interfaces, written text, and data visualisations.
- **Pedagogical Possibilities:** The next element lays out the case writer's suggestions on other ways in which the case could be taught, including in other disciplines or learning environments. These are not as detailed as the Teaching Note but offer a set of possibilities to the user to imagine other uses of the case than those laid out.
- **Case Archive:** The final element of the case is a library of documents—reports to interview transcripts, unedited footage to visual photo libraries—that act as an archive for the case. This repository allows users to also access a host of background and additional information necessary to navigate the larger contexts in which the case is situated.

Each IIHS case—regardless of the diversity of its form—comes structured with these elements. It is our hope that this recognisable framework will enable users to navigate easily across cases with very diverse elements and forms.

Case Note

This case study attempts to understand the establishment of micro-governance units in Hyderabad and evaluate their operation with respect to the deepening of democracy. It does so by examining the rules to establish Ward Committees (WC) and Area Sabhas (AS), a key space for decentralisation and the assumption of a more local and democratic governance framework. By recounting and learning from the experience of Hyderabad, the case addresses three constraints that Indian cities face while trying to deepen democratic engagement: design of the rules, determination of the process and the question of making such governance units operable.

The push for decentralisation in urban India began in the early 1990s with the Government of India (GoI) undertaking several initiatives aimed at decentralising urban governance. The decentralisation policy was implemented in the mid-1990s with the 74th Constitutional Amendment Act (CAA), 1992 which recognised urban local bodies (ULBs) as the third and bottom-most tier of urban government, and assigned specific civic functions to them. The Act compelled state governments over time to amend their municipal laws in order to empower ULBs with the powers and authority required to enable them to function as self-governing institutions. However, after more than two decades since the passing of this landmark legislation, decentralised urban governance continues to be a desired policy goal with little innovation and implementation on the ground. The failure to implement the provisions of this constitutional amendment then led to these aspirations being incentivised as a set of mandatory reforms (at the state level) under JNNURM in 2005.[1] The success of these reforms under the Mission were also negligible with most cases of implementation ending up as acts of posturing without any legitimate outcomes.

Hyderabad, however, was somewhat of an outlier, where ward committees and area sabhas were, in fact, formed. This case examines the formation and operation of these committees in the Mission city of Hyderabad within the larger context of the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh's socio-political history and the particular dynamics of the capital's political geography. The primary objective is to study the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation's (GHMC's) decentralised urban governance initiative and its processes, and evaluate its impact on various stakeholders in the city.

The key questions that are addressed in this case involve an exploration of the circumstances that led to the evolution of these micro-governance units, an evaluation of whether their establishment led to conflicts with the elected corporators, and an examination of any consequent effects on their functioning. The secondary objective of the study is to set the

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[1] The Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) launched in late 2005 was India's largest urban-centric mission with an aim to encourage reforms and fast-track planned development of select cities over a period of seven years.

stage for a long-term research effort on the origin, evolution and functioning of these micro-governance units in the light of internal restructuring efforts such as reviews, course correction measures, etc., and possible externalities such as political and/or administrative restructuring of the city/state.

The methodology of the study involved primary and secondary research supported by both qualitative and quantitative inputs. These include multiple narratives documented through a range of stakeholder interviews, research papers, literature studies, survey responses, stakeholder discussions and detailed audio-visual material, all resourced in a bid to generate useful, comprehensive and holistic case-based teaching material. To get a sense of the actual processes and impacts of how these micro-governance units emerged and functioned, an immersive field study was conducted which encompassed historical and contextual analysis, semi-structured interviews of key stakeholders including managers, corporators of GHMC, members of the ward committees and area sabhas, urban experts and civil society members. Moreover, a longer survey instrument with a detailed questionnaire was implemented in select wards to gauge the response of members of these micro-governance units.

The scope of the study is limited to interactions with select stakeholders and the experiences of the case writer (who was a part of this urban initiative) but could not include the views of citizens due to paucity of resources and time. The scope of the survey instrument is also limited to a random representative sample whose analysis includes only the responses received with both quantitative and qualitative data.

The case does offer reflections and suggestions to truly decentralise to the last mile in Hyderabad. Some of the suggestions obtained include changing the electoral process for committee and sabha memdership, devising ways of reducing political conflict within WCs by reducing clashes with the functions of the corporators, enabling AS members to participate more effectively, strengthening WC offices by providing infrastructure and processes through protocol which can also act as a deterrent for vested interests, designating permanent ward secretaries who are either of a higher cadre or have the support of senior officials in summoning officers of higher cadre, providing support staff for the operation of these micro-governance units, and providing training to all the members, staff and leaders involved in this process.

Components and Materials

The primary case output is a paper that encapsulates the findings of the primary and secondary research conducted in Hyderabad. It discusses the background of the city and its history with a focus on its municipal governance and its political scenario. It also details the institutional setup of the Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporation (GHMC) and the reasons for its formation. It explains the evolution of micro-governance units in the State giving reasons as to why they were established only in Hyderabad, the process of operationalising these units, evaluating their funds, functions and functionaries, their training and review processes and proposals for potential improvements.

GHMC was the only urban local body that was able to establish a working system of decentralised ward-level governance in the state. The paper focuses on the political economy of its formation (Exhibit 1) and operation to understand the underlying causes for this accomplishment using a series of theoretical frameworks (Exhibits 2 and 3). The case paper is accompanied by a repository of case material that includes relevant laws and rules, government circulars, ward development plans, journal articles, presentations, quantitative databases, field notes, maps, geo-spatial files and visual materials like photographs and videos. The purpose of the repository is to allow the learners to explore the case through different media and perspectives, lend support to the concepts and arguments presented in the case, permit deeper examination and enable multiple ways of teaching.

The official documents like laws, rules, government circulars, orders etc. reveal the extent of executive and judicial support that was required to enable these micro-governance units. The reading materials, reports, minutes and presentations provide a deeper understanding of the theories and practices discussed throughout the case paper. The ward development plans, field notes, meeting minutes, manuals and audio-visual material offer a glimpse into the operation and management of these units, while the databases, maps and geo-spatial files provide an opportunity for active immersion in the case to supplement its narratives.

Exhibit 1: First-level decentralization and political orders

In November 2009, the last municipal elections were held in Hyderabad after a delay of two years. Prior to this, municipal elections had been held in 2002 after a gap of nearly 17 years.[2] The delayed election is indicative of the political culture of the state where the city is administered without the participation of elected members, i.e., the corporators.[3] The formation of the GHMC in 2007, a state-level intervention, required a delimitation exercise to establish the boundaries of the 150 new wards. These wards consisted of 100 wards from the older MCH and 50 new wards formed out of the areas of the surrounding municipalities. The delimitation process lasted nearly two years and was one of the key reasons for delayed municipal elections in 2007.[4] The disruption of the prevailing political order in which a certain political party was likely to gain a majority, like it had in the previous elections held in 2002, seemed to be a potential cause for the expansion of the boundaries of MCH to form the GHMC.

In 2007, the delimitation process of municipal wards was conducted by the office of AC (Planning), GHMC. Based on the populations of MCH (37 lakh) and the merged municipalities (17 lakh) recorded in the 2001 Census, the total number of wards were derived. The erstwhile MCH already had 100 wards and their composition was not changed in order to market the proposal to the stakeholders who had an interest in maintaining status-quo. Additionally, the population of 40,000 in the wards under MCH was used as a norm to create new wards in the 12 new municipalities being added. Discussions were held in order to determine the optimal number of wards in a large city like Hyderabad, and a suggestion to have 125 wards was rejected mainly due to the compulsion of leaving boundaries of the existing 100 wards unchanged in the erstwhile MCH, as far as possible. Based on the total population, 143 wards were proposed which were later increased to 150 with the additional 50 wards comprising the surrounding areas. This final proposal was duly approved by the Chief Minister.**[5]**

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[2] One of the reasons for this delay has been attributed by Yadav (2014) to 'greater control exercised by the state government in Andhra Pradesh as [the] task of delimitation of ward boundaries rests with them' (p.197).

[3] Interview with a local urban expert.

[4] Interview with Secretary, GHMC; Hyderabad Municipal Corporations Act, 1955.

[5] Interview with Former Addl. Commissioner (Planning) of GHMC responsible for the delimitation exercise.

Exhibit 2: Box: Politics, IAS and Theories of Planning

Politics, IAS and Theories of Planning

Injection of politics, among other factors, made the rational model redundant as a normative guide to decision-making. Planning researchers developed several variants to cope with the uncertainty and instability created by the injection of politics in decision-making. In Beckman's hands-off approach, planners are expected to operate within the latitude given by the political executive (1973). The advocacy model proposed by Davidoff (1973) conceives of planners as active advocates, not disinterested decision-makers. Incrementalism (Lindblom 1959) suggests that planners decide in small steps based on their past experience of the political processes and local context. Citizen participation was added to politics and goal achievement to decision-making by the strategic model (Bryson and Roering 1987). Adopting practices from the private sector, strategic planning focuses on programme goal setting and achievement, through an analysis of external opportunities, internal strengths and weaknesses of the organisation.

Finally, the 'practice movement' led to a paradigm shift during the 1980s, and the term was applied by Liggett (1996) to planning frameworks that use the real-time experience of planners as 'raw material' for theorizing (Innes 1995). Documenting the characteristics of planners and people and trying to understand and interpret planning activities in specific contexts is central to the new planning paradigm (Krieger 1974; Forrester 1996). Unlike the rational model, the practice movement does not always lead to generalisable models, but provides useful insights into planning practice and its potentialities (Innes 1995). An assumption underlying the practice movement is that learning from experience is more useful than applying universal rules and theories to guide planning action.

The IAS is the bureaucracy in India, which performs regulatory activities, implements programmes and projects, and does several 'residuary' jobs connected to the community. The job-chart of the IAS bears notable similarities to planners' activities. The IAS also followed the rational model during the 1950s and 1960s. In one of the early reports on the IAS after India's independence, Appleby (1953) noted that the IAS, in the mould of a classical Weberian bureaucracy, always tried to find a 'wholly scientific or technical and wholly right decision' (p. 23) and conceived of programme planning as a 'mechanical, merely technical, unvarying' activity (p. 24). However, politics was the cornerstone of the working of the IAS. Narrating his experiences of higher levels of administration L. P. Singh (1970) informed a group of trainee IAS officers that politics was an integral part of functioning—'practically all government is politics—anything you do has political implication', and 'unless you keep on studying political behaviour and problems relating to the political institutions functioning in the country and at least some other countries, I think, you can never make a first-rate civil servant'.

Exhibit 3: Box: Stohr's Principle of Subsidiarity

Stohr's Principle of Subsidiarity

Subsidiarity is a multi-level process that mandates that processes and decisions that can be best performed at local levels should be executed there. Only those that cannot be satisfactorily done at local levels are 'delegated' to higher levels of government, the private sector, or the third sector; accordingly, subsidiarity is a process of bottom-up decentralisation. A defining attribute of subsidiarity is diversity and decentralisation. The subsidiarity principle does not impose unworkable uniform solutions and standard recipes on local areas; therefore, decentralisation is based on local history, culture, issues, and resources, which captures the distinct features and requirements of local areas. Additionally, two pragmatic considerations drive the subsidiarity approach: (1) each social level should take care of what it can do best, but at the same time in a spirit of solidarity ask for help from above if it cannot resolve an issue, and (2) lower levels should look after themselves. In this connection Walter Stohr's notion of 'subsidiarity' leads to 'real' decentralisation (Stohr 2001).

Subsidiarity balances the following shortcomings: (1) the civil society can often be autocratic—instead of beneficiaries, civil society activists can be the largest beneficiaries; (2) local units possess insufficient knowledge of global trends and are unable to undertake inclusive development, especially during a period of rapid globalisation; and (3) larger issues of poverty, illiteracy, and health require macro-level interventions. Subsidiarity overcomes these shortcomings by optimising distributing power, authority, and accountability to multiple levels and three local-level actors (government, private, and the third sector—voluntary, non-governmental, civil society organisations). Moreover, the creation of decentralised units based on subsidiarity is likely to lead to a convergence of the 3Fs (funds, functionaries and functions) in a way that increases the sum of their effects. During a period of rapid globalisation, it is important to balance the needs of local areas with the knowledge of global trends and the subsidiarity norm provides a 'best of both the worlds' approach that leads to the convergence of the 3Fs in the most efficient and effective way at multiple levels and among several actors.

Teaching Note

There are multiple ways in which this case can be taught, based on the learning outcomes intended. Its research outputs can be utilised in a number of ways:

- To create an urban governance case to understand the processes required to decentralise as per the 74th CAA.

- To create an urban governance case to understand how effective the decentralisation initiative has been in a capital city.

- To create an urban governance case to understand the political economy of a state's decision to decentralise under the 74th CAA.

- Combining it with other related cases to encourage interdisciplinary teaching (for example, the Bholakpur case or other cases pertaining to Hyderabad).

- As practica, to enable experiential and applied learning by engaging with real life situations.

The detailed repository as part of the case outputs introduces the possibility of flipped classrooms using the listed potential cases.

1) Analysis of research:

   a. Qualitative: Provide the learner with the entire case repository including the research plan, field notes of the interview, survey analysis—everything except the case outline—and ask them to write a paper that they can later compare with the case paper and analyse the differences in approach, if any.

   b. Quantitative: Provide the learner with survey responses without the survey analysis along with the case paper so that they can analyse the data and draw conclusions. Use the quantitative data to learn analysis (as a skill lab as well as analytical process) and use it to build theoretical claims to either support or refute the arguments presented in the case paper.

2) Research design

   a. Designing surveys: Provide the learner with the entire case repository except the survey related data (sampling method, questionnaires, etc.) and ask them to design a survey questionnaire for this case and compare it to the one actually used for the case.

   b. Generate new concepts and knowledge by doing a comparative analysis of the decentralisation imperative mandated by the Constitution and JNNURM in Mumbai, Bangalore and Chennai. Scale up from rooted small-scale practice to policy design.

3) Exposure: Engage the learners in practica involving an immersion visit to the city of Hyderabad after going through the repository, to conduct interviews and administer

surveys as per their own research design. The applied and experiential learnings should focus on process and product, with a strong element of reflection and an emphasis on collaboration and team work. The possible outcomes could include a strong grounding of theory and analysis, and an understanding of the importance of ethical standards and human relations.

4) Practice:

    a. Extend disciplinary boundaries: Combine the Ward Development Plan proposal with the case on Bholakpur to prepare Ward Development Plans of Bholakpur. Develop a toolkit for the comprehensive planning of places (e.g., localities) for the use of learners during micro-level planning.

    b. In the spirit of political initiatives like the creation of the Aam Aadmi Party, advocate micro-governance institutions to manage operations and maintenance of municipal services, and migrate to entrepreneurship.

5) Praxis lab: Develop a repository of rules for the use of practitioners to deploy in decision situations and for researchers to re-conceptualise theories and conceptual categories derived from settlements in the west. Help practitioners become change agents.

There are many more ways in which this case can be used or taught, the choice of which would be best left to the faculty who intend to use the case to explore various detailed case outputs.

Accessing the Full Case

The full content of this case is open-access and downloadable at www.cases.iihs.co.in.

The full content of this case includes the following documents:

Folder A: Introduction to the Case

    Terms of Use and Agreement

    Reframing Urban Inclusion

    IIHS Case Method

    Preface Note

    Teaching Note

Folder B: Main Case

    Ward Committees and Area Sabhas: Has Decentralised Governance Actually Worked in Hyderabad?

    History of Hyderabad and Secunderabad

    Municipal History of Hyderabad

    Institutional Arrangements in the GHMC

    First-level Decentralisation and Political Orders

    Context of Second-level Decentralisation

    Learning from Practice to Inform Practice

    Applying Concepts to Practice: Making Operational the Notion of Subsidiarity

    Ward Development Plans and Training

    Adapting Practice

Folder C: Case Archives

    Background Research and Reading Material

    Primary and Secondary Datasets

    Literature Review and Case Drafts

    Plans, Policies, Government Documents, Orders, etc.

    Audio-Visuals

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About the Author

Dr Sameer Sharma is currently Joint Secretary (Smart Cities), Ministry of Urban Development, Government of India. An officer in the Indian Adminstrative Services, he has previously been Municipal Commissioner, Greater Hyderabad Municipal Corporartion (GHMC), the posting he draws upon for the writing of this case.

Dr. Sharma has focused on adapting municipal public policy to the meet the challenges of a growing city. He is a strong advocate for increasing efficiency through technology – for example, using the camera of the mobile phone to make municipal managers more accountable and bottom-up decentralization through establishment of ward committees. He received his PhD in Urban Development at the University of Cincinnati and specializes in globalization, metropolitan development, e-governance, and resource mobilization for cities.

Sahil Sasidharan works as a practitioner-cum-researcher cuts across the academics, research, practice and capacity building programmes at IIHS. His research on Delhi, Hyderabad and Puducherry (Auroville) engages with questions of emerging forms of urban governance, evolving practices of planning and challenges for land governance. On the practice front, he has been involved in housing and land assembly related advisory and policy-making efforts, and he also assists with capacity building programmes that focus on planning or urban infrastructure delivery. Prior to his term at IIHS, Sahil was a Planning Officer at the Master Plan unit of Delhi Development Authority, where he assisted in formulating the capital's recently notified land policy and also handled various inter-governmental queries around provisions and review of the Master Plan. Before his time with the government, he had also completed a short stint in the real estate sector of Gurgaon with Emaar-MGF Land Ltd. Sahil holds a Master's degree in Planning from SPA, New Delhi and an undergraduate degree in Architecture from Chennai.

About IIHS

The Indian Institute for Human Settlements (IIHS) is a national education institution committed to the equitable, sustainable and efficient transformation of Indian settlements. IIHS aims to establish an independently funded and managed National University for Research and Innovation focused on the multi-sectoral and multi-dimensional challenges and opportunities of urbanization. The University is intended to be a globally ranked institution. The IIHS is a proposed network of mother and daughter institutions across South Asia, leveraging on the local and regional knowledge and innovation and linking them to global best practices. Its mother campus, based in Bengaluru, will include academic, research and social infrastructure, student and faculty housing. This campus is expected to set international standards for efficient, economic and sustainable design, operations and maintenance.

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